



The Ottawa River Institute

"Fostering sustainable communities in the Ottawa River watershed"

www.ottawariverinstitute.ca

Ottawa River Institute Annual Report for 2009

As in past years, the most prominent area of activity for the Ottawa River Institute in 2009 was sustainable energy, under the leadership of our coordinator Cheryl Keetch, and funded by the **Ontario Trillium Foundation**. In January of 2009, we submitted a final report to Trillium for the 2008-2009 energy grant. Activities continued throughout the year. In February, we co-hosted with the Ontario Sustainable Energy Alliance (OSEA) a very well-attended community forum in Cobden to discuss Ontario's proposed new Green Energy Act, which came into effect later in the year.

We submitted a new grant application on March 2009, and in August, our new one-year Ontario Trillium Foundation sustainable energy project began. We have created, printed and distributed an **Energy Upgrades Resource List**, featuring local a list of Renfrew County building contractors and carpenters who perform work in the areas of energy efficient home building and renovations, and home energy upgrades. This list is available on our web site.

Between September and November 2009, Cheryl organized eight **Home Energy Upgrades** workshops, with additional financial support from the Ottawa River Power Corporation, Eganville Generation Corporation Inc., and Renfrew Power Generation Inc., plus in-kind donations of blower-door demonstrations at two locations. Seventy-five households received kits of materials to take home and use to increase their home's energy efficiency and comfort.

In December 09, ORI partnered with the County of Renfrew to organize the **Renewable Energy Opportunities in Renfrew County** workshop. A variety of speakers provided the latest information on ways to feed electricity from renewable sources into the Ontario power grid.

As our coordinator, Cheryl also organizes meetings of the ORI Fundraising committee, helped develop our fundraising plan, and maintains our contact lists of members and donors. She also is providing ongoing coordinator support to the **Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative**. The collaborative grant between ORI and the Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative, also funded by the Ottawa Trillium Foundation, continued throughout 2009. This project enabled the development of the **Local Food Buying Guide for the Upper Ottawa Valley**, and supported the organization of workshops on topics such as food preservation, cheese making, ecological agriculture; round-table discussions; and presentations on local food self-reliance.

The ORI web site prominently features Board member Richard Copeland's **blog on off-grid living**. In addition to his regular postings on how the weather affects his solar panels and home-scale wind turbines; and on gardening, storing and cooking with local foods; Richard is providing updates, including pictures, on progress with the **MicroFit solar power installations** in the Matawachan area. Four landowners, including past ORI President Ken Birkett, are pioneers in dealing with the bureaucracies of Hydro One and the Ontario Power Authority in creating a distributed network of

small-scale generators feeding into the electric power grid, in response to the feed-in tariff initiative of the Ontario government under the Green Energy Act. We're very grateful to Richard and also to Cheryl for keeping our web site up to date. It also features our **Watershed Ways** columns, which cover a wide variety of topics on sustainable living and appear in a number of Ottawa Valley newspapers.

Board member Kathryn Kasaboski is organizing **book donations for the ORI Collection**, which has its own shelf at the Bonnechere Union Public Library, and is accessible to people in other communities through inter-library loans. We're looking for more donations of books on sustainable energy, sustainable communities, ecological integrity (including nature guides) – anything related to the ORI mission.

ORI Board member Claire Lepine is the organizer of **Seedy Sunday**, sponsored and presented by the Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative and supported by ORI. These "Seedy" events highlight the importance of farmers and gardeners adapting food plant varieties to changing conditions by saving seeds, particularly heritage varieties, mainly using organic methods of food production. In the Ottawa Valley, Seedy Sunday showcases for seeds and plants for sale, local food producers, and gardening presentations. It includes an exchange table for swapping seeds, plants and other gardening goods. The Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative also organizes a very popular "100 Mile Lunch". It was held in March 2009 at Fellowes High School in Pembroke, and was repeated at the same location in 2010 with nearly 500 participants.

In June 2009, Board member John Almstedt hosted our "visioning day" at his cottage at Lake Clear. This event was attended by more than 20 people, and directly led to the development of our **new collaborative project with the Pembroke Area Field Naturalists**. The Ontario Trillium Foundation awarded funding for this project in November 2009. It includes development of a **Biotabase for Renfrew County** that will provide on-line access to data on the flora and fauna of the Ottawa Valley, based on the work of local naturalists and other publicly accessible information sources. It also provides support to organize **drumming circles** for seniors, students, and the general public.

The **ORI Art Gallery** is profiling the work of a number of local artists. Two of them - John Almstedt and Kathy Haycock - are working together to create the **A.Y. Jackson trail** – retracing the steps of Group of Seven painter A.Y. Jackson on his many painting trips throughout Renfrew County, at many of which A.Y. and Kathy's dad Maurice painted together. Purvis Gallery in Pembroke featured paintings from the ORI Art Gallery throughout much of 2009, including during the annual Art Matters! Studio tour. Local artists and artisans were paired with Pembroke businesses that provided store space in which the Artists could present their photography, sculpture, pottery, textiles and paintings. In June 2009, art from the ORI gallery was also on display at the Champlain Trail Museum.

Conclusion

The Ottawa River Institute has had a very successful eighth year of operation, thanks to the contributions of many people. We are very grateful to the Trillium Foundation, local power companies local donors, members, volunteers and staff for their support and assistance. We look forward to continued progress in the future toward sustainable communities and ecological integrity in the Ottawa River watershed!

*Ole Hendrickson, President
For the ORI Board of Directors*